



Rhode Island

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 1999

...working with the Office of Rehabilitation Services to
maximize the potential of people with disabilities
through meaningful employment.

Susan E. Roush, Ph.D.
Chairperson

1999 Annual Report

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I. Council Chair's Report

In 1999, the gubernatorial appointed Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) continued its vital mission of facilitating employment for Rhode Islanders with disabilities. Specifically, the Council continues to be actively engaged in facilitating the goals and objectives of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program administered by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). The full Council conducted its 1999 business at quarterly meetings. The Executive Committee also met quarterly and each committee held numerous meetings and held a day-long planning retreat in October. During 1999, the Council also became more cognizant of its regional and national role among other state Rehabilitation Councils and the Federal agency, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). To that end, Council members attended two national meetings in Washington, DC, and participated in regional teleconferences and a Councils' Internet List-Serve. The Council also provided input to the RSA during the regional evaluation of ORS.

1999 was a year of transition, challenge and focus for the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council. The Council continued its involvement in several of the major issues identified in 1998, specifically, the One-Stop Career Center system, ORS staffing, and transition services. The primary focus of the Council in 1999, however, was with the changes in function and role brought about by the 1998 Rehabilitation Act Re-authorization under Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). This legislation, which authorizes and defines the role of the SRC, mandated significant changes for both the Council and ORS. Among the most significant aspects of the Rehabilitation Act that the SRC addressed this year were: 1) adherence to the concept of informed choice for consumers of ORS services, 2) active involvement in the State Workforce

Investment Board, and 3) evaluation of ORS client satisfaction and a needs assessment of Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Informed Choice

The Council was an active participant in ORS's efforts to integrate informed choice language and practice into their policies, client literature and other documentation. The Council continues to be involved in this ongoing process to implement the spirit, as well as letter, of the law.

State Workforce Investment Board

The Council perceives our relationship with the State Workforce Investment Board to be vitally important to the employment interests of Rhode Islanders with disabilities. We have, through ORS, been actively involved as the Board takes on its new responsibilities. The Council has advocated having a SRC/ORS representative on this Board. We are committed to ensuring that disability issues are an ongoing concern of this Board. In 2000, we will be naming a State Workforce Investment Board member to the Council, as is required by law.

Client Satisfaction and Needs Assessment

These issues and corresponding tasks are complex and ongoing, and undoubtedly will be the focus of the Council for years to come. Although formal data collection has not yet begun, a comprehensive work plan to address these needs was developed.

In addition to the above content-specific activities, a great deal of time and energy were spent in 1999 reorganizing the Council to better meet the challenges

ahead. Specifically, the Council 1) re-organized its committee structure, 2) decided to hire staff, and 3) established a mission statement, slogan and vision.

Committee Structure

To efficiently and effectively address the Council's new responsibilities it became apparent that the Committee structure needed to be re-assessed. (Prior to 1999, the committee structure had not been evaluated since 1993.) Reviewing and prioritizing the tasks facing the Council led to a new Committee structure. Please see Section II for this structure and a summary of each committee's corresponding activities for the year.

Hiring Staff

It also became apparent to the Council that the number and complexity of our responsibilities were outweighing our volunteer resources. Additionally, as mentioned in the 1998 Annual Report, the Council has articulated a goal of increasing its autonomy from ORS. This interest in autonomy is rooted in the Council's desire to become a true partner in our relationship with ORS, something that is difficult when major logistical support for the Council comes from ORS. It should be emphasized that this desire for autonomy grows out of a natural evolution and maturation of the Council. As the group has developed, it is now both willing and capable of taking on the responsibilities that added independence will bring. The Council enjoys a productive, positive relationship with ORS and anticipates strengthening that relationship in the future.

To assist with the expanding Council responsibilities and to facilitate the growing independence from ORS, the decision was made to hire part-time staff. To that end, a consultant was hired to aid in developing a job description and delineating job

responsibilities for a paid staff member. This information is delineated in Section III. Completion of the hiring process is anticipated in early 2000, and the Council looks forward to the support of a dedicated employee.

Mission, Slogan and Vision

Finally, a third major task of the Council this year was the development and endorsement of the group's first mission statement, slogan and vision. The October retreat was dedicated to this significant activity and was successful in integrating the many perspectives and priorities of Council members into concise statements that reflect our focus and values. This was an extremely important process for the Council as it has strengthened our identity and appreciation for the issues.

These planning activities were probably the most important accomplishments of 1999 and have prepared us to meet the new millennium immersed in the challenge of implementing the Rehabilitation Act in the Workforce Investment Act in the best interests of Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Acknowledgements

The Council would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Ms. Diana Donovan of Donovan Associates for her exceptional work in guiding several aspects of our work this year. She guided our efforts in defining the job description for the staff position and also in delineating our mission, slogan and vision. Her assistance proved to be exceptionally valuable.

Additionally in 1999, the SRC said good-bye to several long-standing members who have made significant contributions to our mission and to the lives of persons with disabilities. We will keenly miss the insights, commitment and participation of Margaret

Hoye, Sara Weiss, David DeFelice, Ted Mello, and Rick Harris. The SRC has been extremely fortunate to count them among our membership for many years and we wish them success and happiness in their future endeavors.

II. Committee Activities in 1999

1. By-Laws Committee – Chair: Tom Stott

This year the By-Laws Committee identified the need for several by-laws changes necessitated by changes in the law. Topics related to membership categories and committee membership were researched, and changes were formulated by this committee. Approval of the proposed by-laws changes is anticipated early in 2000, after full review by the SRC.

2. Consumer Committee – Chair: Brian Hubbard

The Consumer Committee is the SRC's newest committee, established in November. Its primary goal is to facilitate consumer involvement in the SRC and to ensure that the consumer's voice is heard as the SRC conducts its business.

3. Employment Committee – Chair: Isabelle Frost

During the past year the Employment Committee met with the purpose of discussing and supporting the ORS in its efforts to enlarge its private sector resource base and business partnerships. During the year a number of employers volunteered their time and met with groups of counselors to help them understand the employment needs of the employer community. Feedback received from both employers and ORS staff was positive. The Employment Committee also focused on the need of the committee to encourage and involve a broader spectrum of employers in Rhode Island to become involved in career

counseling, job development and placement issues. These activities were directed toward supporting the ORS job placement goals.

4. Executive Committee – Chair: Susan Roush

The Executive Committee was involved in several major activities designed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. Specifically, this committee was instrumental in defining the job description for the anticipated staff position, implementing the search for that position, and also for facilitating the process of defining a mission statement, slogan and vision. Additionally, this Committee facilitated the expansion of the Council's national and regional role by attending and participating in a variety of national and regional meetings.

5. Legislative and Advocacy Committee – Chair: Paul Pickens

The Legislative and Advocacy Committee was primarily engaged in two activities this year: exploring the feasibility of a Vendors' Fair and support to ORS on their developing consumer handbook. The committee explored the idea of working with ORS to sponsor a Vendors' Fair and joint training for staff and vendors around issues of client choice. Changes in committee membership, however, meant that this did not come to fruition in 1999. It is anticipated the idea may be revisited at a later date. Secondly, this committee worked with ORS on their developing consumer handbook. Suggestions and input were given to maximize the attractiveness of the handbook and to ensure that it conveys the values of client choice and self-direction in the selection of services leading to

employment. Conveying agency policies and information about services to a constituency who have such a diverse variety of reading and comprehension skills, diverse linguistic and other barriers to accessing the written page, has proven to be very challenging. It is anticipated the committee will continue to be involved in this ongoing ORS task.

6. Nominating and Membership Committee – Chair: Anne Marie Dubuque
(January – July) & **Paul Pickens** (August – December)

This Nominating and Membership Committee is in the process of reorganizing itself with a new membership, leadership and mission. A significant activity for the year was evaluating the Council's performance as part of a process to create ongoing quality leadership development. The Committee is also in the process of nominating and orienting five new members, identifying a chair of the Legislative and Advocacy Committee and a Chair of the State Plan & Policy Committee. Additionally, they are developing a consistent program of orientation and development for the new members so that they feel a sense of ownership of the Council and its mission. Finally, the Committee is making an active commitment to reach out to community groups so that our recruitment efforts are aimed at folks who reflect all of the diversity that is Rhode Island.

7. Quality Assurance Committee – Chair: Jeanne Panarace

In response to the changing law and the corresponding increased responsibilities of the SRC, the Quality Assurance Committee was formed in

1999. In partnership with ORS, and in consultation with the Workforce Investment Board, the Committee is responsible for:

1. reviewing, analyzing and advising ORS regarding the extent, scope and effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation services;
2. reviewing and analyzing the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, ORS functions, services provided by ORS and other entities, and employment outcomes achieved by consumers;
3. conducting a statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities living in the state every three years.

In 1999, the Quality Assurance Committee began developing a work plan for accomplishing these objectives, including draft specifications for consultant evaluation and assessment services.

8. State Plan & Policy Committee – Chair: Ted Mello

Two major tasks occupied this committee during 1999: review of ORS's proposed implementation of the *Individual Plan for Employment* (IPE), and ongoing review of ORS policies. Review of the IPE was directed at ensuring consistency with the Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, improving clarity and maximizing consumer friendliness. Additionally in 1999, the Committee reviewed thirteen ORS policies, addressing such topics as eligibility and IPE development. Although these policies had not been finalized by the end of the year, they were proceeding through the state system with significant input from the Committee. Indeed, the Committee has been encouraged by the response of ORS to their

input and feels that a strong partnership is growing between ORS and the SRC that captures the spirit of the recent changes in the law.

III. Staff Position Job Description

Title: State Rehabilitation Council Staff

Reports to: Chair, Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council

Qualifications: Bachelors degree in human service related field; Masters degree preferred. At least five years of experience in disability or rehabilitation field with a working knowledge of a) Americans with Disabilities Act, b) civil rights for persons with disabilities, c) the public rehabilitation system, d) computers (including skill in word processing, e-mail, data base management, and the Internet). Preference will be given to applicants who have a disability.

Job Functions:

- To work under the direction of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to carry out the mission and vision of the SRC;
- to interface and effectively work with all SRC committees and members, providing coordination and communication among the membership;
- to act as a liaison for the Chair of the SRC to the various committees, providing the Chair's direction to the committees and feedback from the committees to the Chair;
- to facilitate the SRC's relationship with associated agencies, such as the State Workforce Investment Board, SRCs from other states, and designated national bodies;
- to research and provide updates to the SRC on Federal and State legislation impacting persons with disabilities, trends in the field and other information that may be of interest to the SRC;

- to attend quarterly SRC meetings and report to the Council on activities in a timely manner.

Hours and Compensation: 15 hours per week at \$20.00 per hour.

IV. SRC Mission, Slogan and Vision Statement

A. Mission: To work with ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.

B. Slogan: ... working with ORS to maximize the potential of people with disabilities through meaningful employment.

C. Vision:

The SRC is an independent body of diverse members that works together

- to insure continuous improvement in ORS employment outcomes;
- enhances communication among all people and groups committed to increased opportunity for people with disabilities;
- increases employer awareness of people with disabilities as a productive human resource pool; and
- has the respect of decision-makers in the allocation of resources.

V. 1999 Council Membership

Susan E. Roush, PhD., **Chairperson**
URI/Physical Therapy Program

Margaret Hoye, **Vice Chairperson**

Carol Krause-Ferraoli, **Secretary**
Community College of Rhode Island

Anthony Bagaglia
Office of Rehabilitation Services

Rennae Bell
So. New England Rehab. Center

Raymond Carroll, Administrator
Office of Rehabilitation Services
Ex-officio

David DeFelice

Thomas DiPaola, Ph.D.
RI Technical Assistance Project
Providence College

Ann Marie Dubuque
Harmony Hill School

Betty Ethier
Occupations Unlimited

Carmen Ferguson
Projects with Industry

Isabelle Frost
Metropolitan Property & Casualty Ins. Co.

Richard Harris
Northern RI Community Mental Health Ctr

Brian Hubbard

Melissa Jenkins, Ph.D.
Neuropsychology Program
Eleanor Slater Hospital

Ted Mello, Client Assistance Program
RI Disability Law Center

Mary Moore
Adeline LaPlante Memorial Center

Jeanne Panarace
Family Health/Disability Program
Department of Health

Paul Pickens
Goodwill Industries/VR

Elizabeth Priestley
Rhode Island Parent Information
Network, Inc.

Karen Shabshelowitz

Thomas W. Stott, Office of Instruction
Department of Education

Terrence Tully

Sara Weiss
Rhode Island College

Agency Staff

Regina Connor
HRD/HRM Coordinator

K. Frances Andrews
Administrative Assistant